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Indentured Servants

Indentured servitude first appeared in America a little over a decade after the settlement of Jamestown in 1607. Land was abundant and transportation costs to America were high compared to wages in England. An early economist noted that industry is limited but, through lack of labor. The indenture system allowed for labor mobility from England to America, which made available the cultivation of few amounts of new land that would satisfy the demands of the large English market resulting in a marginal growth of labor in agriculture. Prices paid for the servant equals the value of the servant’s contract length. Although the typical servant contract in England was for one to two years, those in America were considerably longer. This was because the transportation costs were high, witched forcing servants to enter into longer contracts of minimum 3 years. Special contracts were given to servants being taught a specific trade or skill, which increased their contracts and pay.

With laws to protect these people’s rights there were consequences as well. These consequences were made to punish those who decide to run away from there perspective jobs. The punishment for this is a harsh jail sentence of an extended contract. Usually people who were sent to jail suffered and died in the later years. Jail was nowhere close to the jails we have now. The word jail meant death to these early settlers, so it wouldn’t be smart to break the rules. Although it was unfair to the early settlers that had to work for there freedom it was still a better achievement compared to the new immigrants who came in to America freely. Indentured servants grew as the demand of labor increased tremendously.

If a servant were to become pregnant, the court would need to consider lost earnings and medical costs when assigning her extra service. A pregnant slave was usually given work off, once it was known that she was pregnant. Fifty percent of a woman product would range from 10 to 11 cents per hour. This half-time workload usually began in the third month and lasted until the eighth month. During the last month of pregnancy the slave’s work was reduced to the next year so it can also be assumed that the woman would continue to work only at 50% of her usual workload because she had to breast-feed and nurture the baby. Pregnant servants were sometimes punished by whippings.